
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 1018

AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR WEIGH STATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTRONIC RENEWAL NOTICES AND THE ELIMINATION OF VISION SCREENING TESTS FOR MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATORS.

SUMMARY:

By law, the departments of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and Public Safety (DPS) share responsibility for staffing the state's six weigh stations. The bill gives the DMV commissioner primary responsibility for staffing and coordinating coverage and hours of operation at these facilities. It requires DMV to staff all six shifts at the Danbury weigh station, rather than to split the six shifts evenly with DPS. The DMV commissioner alone, rather than with the DPS commissioner, must adjust work shifts at the weigh stations daily to create an unpredictable schedule.

The bill makes the DPS commissioner responsible for assigning one state trooper to each weigh station work shift. The commissioner also must assign troopers (1) trained in commercial motor vehicle enforcement to patrol state roads, and (2) to portable scale locations.

The bill eliminates the (1) handicapped driver training program (§ 18); (2) driver's license vision screening program scheduled to start July 1, 2011 (§ 6); and (3) DMV commissioner's ability to renew a driver's license or non-driver's identity card at every other renewal without the license or card holder's personal appearance (§ 6).

It eliminates the DMV commissioner's authority to schedule license renewals every four or six years but retains the six-year maximum license term (§ 6). Current law, unchanged by the bill, requires that commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) be renewed every four years, and allows the commissioner to renew licenses for drivers age 65 and over

for two-year terms.

The bill requires DMV to create an electronic process to notify holders of driver's licenses, CDLs, and identity cards when these documents expire (§§ 5-7). As under current law, she must notify license and CDL holders at least 15 days before their current license expires.

The bill exempts DMV from a requirement to maintain a toll-free telephone line (§ 8) and makes conforming changes (§§ 9-7).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2011

§§ 1-4 — WEIGH STATION RESPONSIBILITIES

Shift Assignments

Under current law, DPS and DMV each staff three work shifts in each seven-day period (Sunday through Saturday) at the Danbury weigh station. The bill gives DMV responsibility for all six work shifts and requires the DMV commissioner, rather than the DPS commissioner, to coordinate Danbury's coverage with the Greenwich weigh station to assure concurrent coverage.

Current law authorizes the staffing of 10 staggered shifts in each seven-day period (Sunday through Saturday) at portable scale locations in four geographical areas established by the DPS commissioner. The bill eliminates the staggered, 10-shift limit and instead requires the DPS commissioner to assign troopers to enforce motor vehicle laws in the four geographical areas in each seven-day period. Under current law, the DPS commissioner may assign any personnel remaining in the DPS traffic unit to the permanent weigh stations in Waterford and Middletown or the portable scale locations. The bill instead authorizes the DMV commissioner to assign DMV personnel to these locations.

Current law also authorizes the DPS commissioner to assign DPS traffic unit personnel to work between nine and 12 shifts in each seven-day period from Sunday through Saturday to patrol and enforce highway safety laws. The bill instead authorizes the DPS

commissioner to assign one trooper to each weigh station work shift in each seven-day period, and eliminates the requirement that these troopers patrol. But it authorizes the DPS commissioner, in addition to conducting enforcement activities at weigh stations, to assign troopers trained in commercial motor vehicle enforcement to conduct roaming commercial motor vehicle enforcement operations on state highways.

Under current law, the transportation commissioner, in consultation with the DMV and DPS commissioners, was to (1) establish a program to implement regularly scheduled operating hours for the weigh stations by January 1, 2004, and (2) report annually on the program to the Transportation Committee, starting October 1, 2004. The bill reinstates the deadlines for the commissioners to meet these requirements as January 1, 2012 and October 1, 2012, respectively.

Traffic Backlogs

The bill makes DMV's commercial vehicle safety division, rather than state police under DPS, responsible for temporarily closing any weigh station where a backlog of traffic is causing a traffic hazard.

Log Books

Current law required the weigh stations to submit logs containing certain information to the DPS commissioner, and for the commissioner, by December 15, 2007, after consulting with the DMV commissioner, to develop and distribute a form to record this information. It required the DPS commissioner, starting January 1, 2008, to submit a semi-annual written report containing this information to the Transportation Committee, and for the information to be posted on DMV and DPS web sites. The bill instead requires the logs to be submitted to the DMV commissioner, and for the DMV commissioner to (1) develop and distribute the form by December 15, 2011, and (2) report the information to the Transportation Committee by January 1, 2012, and semi-annually thereafter. The report need only be posted on the DMV website.

BACKGROUND

Weigh Stations and the Enforcement of Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Laws

Connecticut has six fixed weigh stations (one each in Danbury, Greenwich, Middletown, and Union and two in Waterford) that are staffed by DPS and DMV personnel. Since 1998, state law has required minimum staffing of all fixed inspection facilities and portable scales used by mobile inspection teams. The state police (DPS) have been principally responsible for weighing operations at the Greenwich facility; DMV personnel are principally responsible for these operations at the Union facility. Since September 1, 2010, DPS and DMV have each staffed three work shifts at the Danbury facility.

There are two programs for inspecting commercial motor vehicles for compliance with maximum vehicle size and weight and safety laws and regulations. DPS operates one through the State Police's Traffic Services Unit. The State Police program is a law enforcement effort aimed at achieving strict compliance with applicable requirements. DMV operates the other through its Commercial Vehicle Safety Division. The DMV program implements the federal Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program. Truck weighing is done as part of the DMV program, but is not its primary focus. The DMV inspectors conduct roadside safety inspections, but also engage in terminal audits, new carrier reviews, and other activities that are part of the federal program.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 23 Nay 12 (03/18/2011)